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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the relationship between relative language proficiency and the types of questions produced by bilingual children in different settings and situations, taking into account the whole language repertoire in both languages and in different settings. The subjects were six third-graders in a self-contained maintenance bilingual education program in a midwestern city. Video- and audio-taped data collected in the classroom, at home, and in the park were analyzed. The data show that the children produced the same question repertoire previously found in English monolingual children and adults. Children asked more questions in the language in which they were more proficient. Certain question types appeared only in children who were proficient in a language, while other question types were characteristic of the speech of limited-proficiency children. The use of question types was found to vary across classroom activities. Further study of use of different speech acts, in relation to relative proficiency and within a sociolinguistic framework, will enhance the design of holistic models for describing bilingual children's language behavior across settings and situations. (Author/MSE)

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A Sociolinguistic Perspective of Language Proficiency of Limited English Proficient Students

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between the relative language proficiency and the types of questions, as speech acts, produced by bilingual children in different settings and situations. The main premise of the study is that to study language proficiency of bilingual children, a holistic perspective should be used and the whole language repertoire in both languages and in different settings should be taken into account.

The subjects of the study are six third grade students attending a self contained maintenance bilingual program in a midwest city. Video and audio taped data collected in the classroom, at home and in the park were coded and analyzed for the study. The data shows that children produce the same question repertoire previously found in English monolingual children and adults. Children asked more questions in the language they were more proficient. Certain types of questions appear only in children who were proficient in a language while other question types were characteristic of the speech of limited proficiency children. The use of question types was found to vary across classroom activities. It is suggested that further study of use of different speech acts, in relation to relative proficiency and within a sociolinguistic framework, will enhance the design of holistic models toward describing language behavior of bilingual children across settings and situations.

A Sociolinguistic Perspective of Language Proficiency of Limited English Proficient Students

Tests of language proficiency widely used in bilingual programs vary in the type of constructs used to measure proficiency. Some of them measure mainly vocabulary knowledge, others measure the use of certain grammatical forms varying in complexity, still other tests use a more complete construct, where function as well as form of language are taken into account, to determine language proficiency.

Few language assessment instruments available at present assess the ability of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students to function adequately in the educational process. De Avila and Duncan (1976) have examined 46 tests of language proficiency and dominance: 43 measured vocabulary range; 34 dealt with oral syntax comprehension; but only 9 were aimed at measuring functional uses of language. The focus on structural aspects of language is ironic, given that tests phonology and grammar are not accurate predictors of effective participation in the classroom or communicative competence (Savignon, 1972, Tucker, 1974 and Upshur and Palmer, 1974).

In general, the constructs of currently used tests are based on adult expectations of what children should be able to produce linguistically rather than what children do. It is thought, that the dichotomy between what tests measure and what children do linguistically make the relationship between the content of tests and the child language repertoire non-congruent. The results of these tests do not portray the richness of the natural language repertoire of children. In turn, children are penalized (i.e. retained at lower grade

levels for age groups, etc.) for not producing what adults feel they should produce and, this way, it is impossible to account for the real communicative competence of children.

Language proficiency should be described as a measure of communicative competence as defined by Hymes (1972) and subsequently by Halliday (1973), where function as well as form of language are taken into account. Functional language competence is defined as the underlying knowledge to make utterances in order to accomplish goals and to understand the utterances of others in terms of their goals (Shuy, 1977). Language proficiency cannot be described accurately unless it is assessed in communicative situations which occur naturally. This is needed in order to cover a wide range of communicative skills in a wide variety of contexts. In the case of school children this should involve the child's level of facility across different speech events (i.e. conversations with peers and siblings, formal interactions with teachers, etc.), and his/her performance within various speech functions such as requesting and giving information, commanding, persuading, complaining, etc. (Hernandez-Chavez, 1978).

With bilingual children, the specification of the context in which each or both languages are used is relevant because to say that children are dominant or more proficient in English or Spanish is insufficient. As Shuy points out, in order to begin to assess language abilities accurately one has to assess comparative language abilities in a broad number of contexts, specifying in detail where, under what circumstances, and to what extent each language is used, as well as the relationships among these contexts (Shuy, 1977). Thus, is a bilingual child more dominant or more proficient in English

at school? At the neighborhood playground? Or with her or his siblings? One has to consider, then, not only a quantitative dimension but a qualitative dimension as well. A holistic approach to proficiency assessment examines language use in specific situations, with different interlocutors and for different purposes. Furthermore, language variability should be seen as an asset rather than as a liability. Traditionally, and especially in educational circles, bilingual children are considered highly proficient in a language when that language resembles the one used by a monolingual speaker. However, as Lavandera (1978) points out, it is only in bilingually defined settings and situations when the bilingual's total verbal repertoire is fully used. In those settings, the speaker is able to activate all the varieties possessed by him or her, mix them, and thus take advantage of his or her whole range of linguistic competencies.

Traditionally, testing situations with bilingual subjects which are defined only in terms of knoledge of one language tend to reduce the speaker's linguistic repertoire, which often results in a situation in which the speaker appears to be a non-assertive person This is a negatively interpreted characteristic in a dominant society (Hymes, 1974; Lavandera, 1978; Phillips, 1972).

In order to understand and evaluate language proficiency and levels of success in language learning, one must go beyond purely linguistic variables. Educational attainment "is shaped by a complex set of variables that includes among other things demographic patterns, socioeconomic status and class alignments, cultural values, community attitudes, community demands, school commitment, and community participation" (Sole, 1980, p. 140).

Recently, studies done (not necessarily dealing with bilingual children) have not only examined language behavior in specific speech situations, but have also shifted the unit of analysis away from the sentence level to speech acts and events. Current research projects dealing with discourse structure focus on various other systematic levels such as turns of speaking, conversations, moves, utterances, or exchanges (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; Ervin-Tripp, 1977). All of these studies examine functional diversity in language, and indicate that there is not always a direct correspondence between linguistic functions and structural forms. Questions, for example, are difficult to code because some questions can be interpreted as requests for information, others are imbedded imperatives, while still others are simply rhetorical (Ervin-Tripp, 1977). Thus, the function of an interrogative, declarative or imperative sentence may be served by different forms. This results in a lack of correspondence between form and function because any given speech act can include several grammatical structures, and any given grammatical structure can be used to perform several communicative acts (Coulthard, 1977; Hymes, 1971).

Dore (1977) states that form alone cannot determine pragmatic function, because the hearer's interpretation of the speaker's communicative intent is dependent on various factors that function independently of the grammar. The first step in the formalization of the analysis of the functional use of speech according to Labov is to distinguish "what is being said from what is being done" (Labov, 1972, p. 191). This type of analysis must relate a smaller number of sentences written within a grammatical framework to a much larger set of actions accomplished with words which have other surface forms,

such as an information question or a statement. In these cases, the speaker must have a knowledge of the function of the utterance in order to understand it as a request for action.

If one sustains the view that Hispanic bilinguals can maximize their ability to communicate socially only by using their total linguistic repertoire, then one must take into account the whole linguistic continuum, including code-switching behavior when measuring language proficiency from a holistic perspective. This study examines the way Hispanic children, who are at different levels of proficiency in English and Spanish ask questions of their peers during natural classroom interaction and in other informal contexts (i.e., home). The identification of the social contextual variables that influence the types of questions the children use will also be discussed. One outcome is to learn if there are any differences in types of questions asked by children who are more proficient in one or the other language when compared with children who are less proficient in the same language.

As Ervin-Tripp (1977) has stated, certain communicative acts are especially suitable for functional language analysis. Questions, for example, have a high frequency of occurrence, require responses by the addressee and the audience, and are used to communicate a variety of intentions.

Some studies have been done which dealt with the questioning strategies used by English monolingual children of the same age as those included in this study (Ervin-Tripp, 1977; Dore, 1977; Peck, 1978). However, most of the issues raised in those studies deal with a comparison of children's and adults' discourse patterns. In our study we examined the repertoire of questions used by six children of Spanish-English speaking background who are at different levels of proficiency in both languages.

Research Questions

In trying to discuss alternative efforts in developing holistic constructs to measure language proficiency the following questions have been formulated:

a) Is there a relationship between the types of questions asked in the native language (L1) and in English (L2) as a function of the relative language proficiency of the children studied?

b) Do question type patterns vary according to the setting (i.e. home vs. school, across different subjects)?

By exploring answers to these questions, the role of sociolinguistic factors and particularly the role of discourse analysis in the measurement of language proficiency of LEP students can be clarified. As such, answers to these questions will contribute toward new holistic constructs designed to measure language proficiency which can be incorporated into future assessment procedures.

Method

Subjects

The subjects of this study were six Hispanic children attending third grade in a self-contained maintenance bilingual program. The subjects were chosen according to their relative (L1/L2) language proficiency as follows:

Paula: High English Proficiency -- High Spanish Proficiency

Ana: High English Proficiency -- Low Spanish Proficiency

Carmen: High English Proficiency --No Spanish Proficiency

Jose: Low English Proficiency --Low Spanish Proficiency

Juanita: Low English Proficiency -- High Spanish Proficiency

Cesar: No English Proficiency -- High Spanish Proficiency

The levels of proficiency used to describe the children's proficiency are the ones described by De Avila (1975) in the Language Assessment Scales (LAS). Students were rated as non-proficient in a language if they were rated as Level 1. They were described as limited in proficiency in a language if they were diagnosed as being Level 2 - 4 and they were rated as proficient if they were diagnosed as Level 5 in a particular language. The subjects were chosen after assessment information on their relative language proficiency was collected from the following sources: a) administration of the Language Assessment Scales (LAS) in Spanish and English, b) teacher assessment of the children's proficiency, c) parents perception of language proficiency of children and d) researcher assessment of proficiency levels in Spanish and English, after long observation of the child in the classroom and an informal interview. Children were chosen as subjects for the study when at least three out of four criteria described above rated the child's proficiency at the same level.

Data Collection Procedure

After permission was given by parents for the children to participate in the study, each child was videotaped during an entire school day. The target child wore a lapel microphone during the taping session. A stationary camera (SONY AVC 3250) was used for data collection purposes. The camera was focused on the target child and the children around him/her. Subsequently, children were videotaped at home playing with other children and at a picnic where all six children interacted. Several audio recorders were used to collect data in areas where the camera was not recording. Field notes were collected regarding classroom activities, etc. during the days the video recording took place.

Data Analysis

A transcription code system was developed to analyze the videotaped data. The information coded included the following:

1. Location in the tape of interaction or utterances (in the case of solliloquia)
2. Speaker: TC = target child, AC = another child, T = teacher, Exp = experimenter
3. Transcription (only conversations in which the target child was involved were transcribed)
4. Context (information relative to the lesson, activity, etc.)
5. Immediate situation (a brief description of what is happening between people involved in the interaction)
6. Translation (if in Spanish)

The transcription system was explained to several assistants who transcribed the tapes. The main investigator was available to clarify any ambiguity during the videotaped data analysis. Subsequently, a different assistant checked the same tape to assure the reliability of the information. Only when the two raters agreed to the transcriptions were the data used for further analysis. Unintelligible utterances were dropped from the data set.

A system to code target children interactions was designed, with the same information from the transcripts. An interaction was defined as a series of conversational turns by two or more speakers around a common activity or topic which were temporally related. Questions which appeared in the interactions were classified according to a specific taxonomy developed and/or adapted from previous studies. (Ervin-Trip, 1977, Dore, 1977). Subsequently, questions

which appeared in the different categories in the taxonomies were classified by the classroom context in which they occurred (i.e., math, reading, etc.).

Results and Discussion

As explained before, the data discussed here comes from the child-child and child-teacher interaction both inside and outside the classroom which were extracted from transcripts of the videotapes which were made. Interactions were defined as a series of conversational turns by two or more speakers around a common activity of topic, and which are temporally related.

A total of 555 questions were contained in the total data corpus (home and school contexts). Table 1 lists the types of questions and how each was classified. The data were classified independently by two experienced coders to assure inter-rater reliability.

Insert Table 1 about here

Table 2 and 3 list the number and percentages of questions used by the six children in the classroom (179 for English and 159 for Spanish).

Insert Table 2 about here

Insert Table 3 about here

Tables 4 and 5 include the number and percentage of questions asked in other informal settings: at home, at the park, and during a picnic. In these

informal contexts 63 questions were asked in English and 154 were used in Spanish.

Insert Table 4 about here

Insert Table 5 about here

Frequency of Questions by Language and Proficiency

A frequency count of the questions in the data corpus demonstrates that questions occur more often in the language in which the child is more proficient. Although Paula and Jose were rated as having equal proficiency in both languages, Paula as English and Spanish proficient and Jose as limited in both Spanish and English proficiency, they still showed a preference for one language over another when questioning. Paula asked 83% of her questions in English while Jose asked 18.7% of his questions in English. Paula's high frequency of English questions may be explained by the fact that she spends most of her time with native English-speaking students. Jose, on the other hand, socializes more with the LEP students in the class who speak mostly in Spanish.

Question Use Patterns in Formal Contexts (classroom)

An analysis of classroom questioning patterns showed that requests for information had the highest frequency of occurence in both languages in the classroom (39.1% for English and 47.2% for Spanish), followed by yes/no questions (15.1% for English and 24.4% for Spanish). Requests for permission,

requests for clarification, and rhetorical questions had a higher incidence of occurrence among children who were more proficient in English.

After comparing the types of questions asked according to levels of proficiency, it was found that in the formal classroom context, in English as well as in Spanish, children asked more information questions followed by yes/no questions. The third most frequently used type of request in this context was requests for approval (in Spanish), and permission requests (in English). We can infer from these data that children who are limited or non-proficient in Spanish and/or English have more comprehension than production in terms of requests. Although Jose appears to have asked more questions than all the students who were limited or non-English proficient, we see that most of his requests are hesitation questions (36.1%) which shows his linguistic insecurity in English. With regard to Spanish, however, Jose demonstrates more competence in terms of his knowledge and repertoire of questioning strategies. The data also demonstrate that there is a considerable difference between proficient and non-proficient or limited proficiency students in terms of the level of interaction. Limited or non-proficient students asked only four questions in both languages, out of a total of 338 requests which were recorded in formal contexts.

It needs to be pointed out that the reason some of the children asked certain types of questions in one of the two languages may be due to the existing classroom structure. In spite of the nature of the program as designed, a (maintenance program), the limited English proficiency (LEP) students in this sample were perhaps involuntarily isolated from the rest of the students most of the time. They generally worked in small group

situations with the teacher aide, and the interaction tended to be in Spanish. Even when the groups were reading in English, the children asked the teacher aide questions in Spanish to which she also replied in Spanish.

At the same time, there is a tendency to group those students who are equally and highly proficient in both languages with English monolingual students (white and black children). This was the case with Paula who was the most balanced bilingual of the group and was always assigned to work with the English monolingual students. It may be that her opportunities to maintain and improve her Spanish proficiency were curtailed while she continued to develop her proficiency in English.

Use of Questions by Types of Activities

We related the types of questions asked to the types of activities in which the children were engaged to see if there were any types of questions that were asked more frequently in one situational context than another. Tables 6 shows the types of questions asked according to the type of activity: Language Arts, reading, math, and art in English, Spanish and both languages respectively. Another category included here is informal talk. The category of "informal talk" is less formal than the type of interaction which occurs during a structured activity dealing with reading or math, but is more formal than the interactions recorded in typically informal settings, such as playing at home or at the park.

Insert Table 6 about here

With regard to the total percentage of questions used in the different categories, we find that the ordering is as follows: Language Arts (39%), Informal Talk (21.3%), Art (20.1%), Math (10.9%), and Reading (8.6%). When we examine the types of questions that occur the most during the different activities, we find that the majority of the requests for information were asked during the language arts activities (49.2%), whereas the majority of the yes/no questions occurred during reading activities (27.2%). Activities dealing with art account for the highest percentage of Requests for Clarification (20.6%), Requests for Approval (7.3%), and Requests for Action (11.8%). The majority of the Requests for Permission (16.7%) and of Rhetorical questions (8.3%) occurred during the informal talk interaction.

Characteristics of Questions and Discourse Patterns in the Classroom

Not all utterances were composed of full propositions. Many questions consist of only one word requests for clarification, such as "huh?" which is a recurrent pattern in children with low proficiency. This pattern was observed frequenly with Ana when she tried to have a conversation with one of the researchers in Spanish.

Some of the questions were ambiguous. Yes/no questions seemed similar on certain occasion to requests for approval, and requests for information could also have been coded as imbedded imperatives. However, after looking at the context the real function of the utterance became clear, as in the following example, in which the question is a request for action rather than a request for information:

Cesar: Tienes lapiz grande?

(Do you have a big pencil?) (waits for pencil)

Prestaselo a Jose.

(Let Jose use it.)

Arturo: No sabia que eras su amigo tantito.

(I didn't know you were his friend.)

Cesar: Tantico nomas. Prestaselo pa cer el work y mas na.

(Just for few minutes. Let him use it to work and nothing else.)

Rhetorical questions seem to be a more sophisticated level of language use. The majority of the rhetorical questions in English were used by students who had a high level of proficiency in that language, e.g.,

Paula: These are my pencils.

Mimi: One is mine.

Paula: That's .. How am I going to erase them?

Mimi, could I have your eraser?

It is obvious from the preceding example that the addressor does not expect to get an answer to her question and thus, continues with the next request for action. An interesting kind of discourse pattern occurs when questions are used to answer other questions when speakers do not want to commit themselves to a definite answer, e.g.,

T: How would you feel about this friend of yours telling your teacher?

Paula: Sad?

T: What would you want to do with that friend?

Paula: Beat him?

These types of answers are particularly noticeable in the speech of Jose, a very low proficiency speaker in English, when he tries to communicate in that language.

Example 1:

T: Jose, tell me where are these people going to sleep

Jose: Here ... living room?

T: Okay. No, in the bedroom.

Example 2:

T: Where did you put your milk?

Jose: In here.

T: What's that?

Jose: The refrigerator?

Jose's hesitation and insecurity in answering in English was increased by the attitude of the teacher who often ignored his questions and continued to speak without paying attention to him. Furthermore, he did not seem to be accepted by the rest of his classmates who felt that his Spanish discourse relied too heavily on lexical items which they did not consider appropriate for classroom interactions such as dirty words or double meaning statements. They would regularly laugh at him when he made mistakes which contributed to his feeling of insecurity and to his hesitating questions, e.g.,

T: But this here is a rug. It's on the ....

Jose: Rug? (Everybody laughs, Jose looks embarrassed.)

T: It's on the floor. The rug is on the floor.

Although Paula also used this pattern in her discourse once in a while, her answers marked by questioning intonation did not produce the same derisive reaction as Jose's, because Paula was a leader in the class due to her high proficiency in both languages.

One can see then that the same types of questions are asked in both languages, although children who are more proficient in English seem to have

access to a greater variety of questioning strategies. In addition, the type of setting (i.e. classroom or playground) or activity (i.e. different subject areas) will influence the language in which the questions are asked. Consequently, in a bilingual class children have to be given an opportunity to work in different groups so that they are not isolated from a acquiring a richer bilingual language experience, especially when maintenance of the two languages is the goal of the program.

Questions Used in Informal Contexts

Data on questions asked in informal settings were also extracted from the transcripts. These data come from child-child interactions which occurred in three types of informal settings: at home, playing at the park, and interacting during a picnic attended by all the children.

A total of 237 questions were coded in the informal settings. As previously noted, Tables 4 and 5 list the number and percentage of questions asked per child in these informal contexts, in both English and Spanish. As was evidenced in the formal contexts, requests for information showed the highest frequency of occurrence in both English (49.2%) and Spanish (33.7%), followed by yes/no questions (25.3% for English and 49% for Spanish). In Spanish as well as in English, no hesitation questions were recorded in this setting. In both languages, the lowest frequency of occurrence in informal settings were shared by requests for approval (1.6% in English, and 0% in Spanish), and requests for permission (4.8% in English and 1.2% in Spanish). This is in contrast to the question patterns in formal contexts which were described before.

If one compares questions asked in English in formal and informal settings one sees that the ordering is the same: requests for information, yes/no questions, and requests for clarification. With regard to questions asked in Spanish, however, the highest percentage of questions were yes/no questions, followed by requests for information, and by requests for clarification. No hesitation questions were recorded in informal settings, and the lowest frequency of occurrence was shared between requests for permission and rhetorical questions.

An examination of the types of questions asked in informal settings according to levels of proficiency shows again that there is a big difference between the competence demonstrated by linguistically proficient students compared with the one exhibited by students who are limited or non-proficient in either or both languages. Students at higher proficiency levels exhibited a higher frequency of questions and a wide range of questions.

In informal contexts, Spanish proficient students used 131 questions in Spanish as opposed to 23 questions in Spanish asked by limited or non-proficient students. In regard to questions in English in informal contexts, proficient students used 47 questions whereas limited or non-English proficient students used only 16. It is important to point out that the higher percentage of questions used in Spanish is due to the fact that Juanita, a Spanish proficient student, was taped at her home playing with siblings and friends for a longer period of time than the rest of the students. Eighty four percent of the 154 questions in Spanish were asked by her. (see Table 5).

With regard to the types of questions used in informal settings, the ordering of the questions asked in Spanish by Spanish proficient students was as follows: Yes/No questions, information questions, and requests for clarification. Students who were Limited or non-Spanish proficient used a higher percentage of information questions followed by requests for clarification and by yes/no questions.

When English proficient students ask questions in English in informal contexts the ordering was: information questions, yes/no questions, and requests for clarification. Students who were limited or non-English proficient, used the highest percentage of information questions (75% in all contexts). The rest of the types of questions are distributed equally (6.2% for all of them) (see Table 4).

In comparing the use of questions across settings we find that requests for information have the highest frequency of occurrence in both languages in all contexts, followed by yes/no questions and by requests for information. Requests for permission have a higher percentage of occurrence (13.1%) in formal contexts than in informal ones (6%), perhaps due to the fact that in formal contexts those questions were addressed to the teacher. The same can be said for requests for approval (10.4% in formal contexts as opposed to 1.6% in informal settings).

Discussion and Conclusion

Judging from the types of questions exhibited by the six target children in their spontaneous speech and in their formal interactions in the classroom, one can say that they have receptive competence in all of the conventional forms that questions may take in English and Spanish. This includes two

functional dimensions: the identification and comprehension of questions, and the selection of these speech acts which are appropriate to the social situation in which they are a part.

In terms of actual production of the wide range of questioning strategies, such as that one described for monolingual speakers (Dore, 1977; Ervin-Tripp, 1977; Peck, 1978), it varies according to the levels of language proficiency students possess in each language. The data consistently show that students who are proficient in a language ask more questions in that language than those who are of limited proficiency in English and/or Spanish. Furthermore, developmental factors may account for the low frequency of occurrence of more complex types of questions, such as rhetorical questions. This is an area of questioning behavior which should be studied further.

There are other factors that influence the number and type of these speech acts used: the context of the interaction, the social situation, and the type of audience present during the interaction. In effect, the number and type of questions will depend on the type of activities in which the children are engaged. For this study, in the classroom setting, more questions were asked during language arts and art than during math and reading, which were more structured and teacher-directed activities.

In the case of children who show low proficiency in both languages (such as Jose) there may be other extra-linguistic factors that need to be explored to explain their low levels of proficiency in both languages. Our data show that, for Jose, low expectations on the part of the teacher and teacher aide, result in less participation by him in classroom activities. The data show that there is a recurrent pattern where Jose is ignored by the teacher and the

teacher aide who prefers to call on other students more frequently. This fact, as well as his passive personality traits, may account for some aspects of Jose's actual linguistic production.

The students who are at lower levels of proficiency in English (Jose, Juanita and Cesar) spent a great percentage of their class time learning language arts which was taught by the Hispanic teacher aide, and thus their interaction tended to be in Spanish. This social factor may explain in part their low production of English forms. These children also interacted mainly with other Spanish dominant children and had few opportunities to try out their developing English skills in the classroom context. There is a similar situation with the limited Spanish proficient students (Carmen and Ana) who interacted most of the time among themselves or with the native English speaking bilingual teacher, and thus had fewer opportunities to try out their developing competence in Spanish. There is a need to examine this recurrent interactional pattern of involuntary segregation. Low-proficiency students should be given an opportunity to mix more with students who are at higher levels of proficiency in the second language. This integrative approach is especially needed for those students, such as Paula, who are at present equally proficient in both languages, so that they are helped to develop and maintain both languages which is the goal of the bilingual program in this classroom.

Findings from this study have important implications for further research. First of all, they show a need to develop test constructs which are integrative, multifaceted and based on what children can do rather than what adults expect them to do. To this end, more research is needed to explore

children's language use both in formal and informal natural settings. The present study is an initial step in this direction and is not conclusive in regard to the specifics of the most appropriate manner to use new test constructs in order to test language proficiency. Before any new constructs are developed or conceptualized, the concept of language proficiency should be redefined. The study shows a need to look at function as well as form of language when determining language proficiency. Besides, More studies of children's language use for different purposes and involving different speech acts (negations, questions, etc.) among children at different levels of proficiency and with larger populations are necessary to improve the state of the art in this area.

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Table 1

Repertoire of Questions and Examples of Communicative Intentions and Their Meaning

Requests for Information	Solicit information about the identity, location, time, or property of an object, event, or situation; e.g., En cual página vas tú?
Requests for Clarification	Solicit more specific information when the child has failed to understand the referent of the previous utterance; e.g., Which one?
Requests for Approval	To request a judgment or an attitude about events or situations; e.g., Do you think this looks good?
Requests for Action	Solicit the listener to perform, not to perform, or stop to perform an action; e.g., José, préstame esta goma?
Request for Permission	Solicit permission to perform an action; e.g., Miss Jones, can I finish this?
Yes/No Questions	Solicit affirmation or negation of the propositional content of the addressor's utterance; e.g., Are we leaving now?
Rhetorical Questions	Solicit a listener's acknowledgment to allow speaker to continue; e.g., Did I collect this one? All of them. I'll tell you right now.
Hesitation Questions	Answer a question with another question, showing hesitation and insecurity; e.g., Here . . . living room?

Table 2

Percent of Questions in English Asked by Each Child and all Children in the Classroom

Child	Paula	Ana	Carmen	Jose	Juanita	Cesar	All Children N=6
Level	5	5	5	3	1-2	1	
Total number of Questions	52	58	54	11	1	3	179
			Percent Use of Each Type of Question per Child and for Total Population				
Requests for Information	32.7	37.9	48.1	27.3	100	33.3	39.1
Requests for Clarification	5.8	22.4	13.0	27.3	0	0	14.5
Requests for Permission	0	19.0	14.8	0	0	33.3	11.2
Requests for Approval	1.9	0	7.4	0	0	0	2.8
Yes/No Questions	19.2	15.5	11.1	9.1	0	33.3	15.1
Requests for Action	5.8	3.5	0	0	0	0	2.8
Rhethorical Questions	15.4	1.7	5.6	0	0	0	6.7
Hesitation Questions	19.2	0	0	36.3	0	0	7.8

Table 3

Percentage of Questions in Spanish Asked by Each Child and Across all Children in the Classroom

Child	Paula	Juanita	Cesar	Jose	Ana	Carmen	All Children N=6
Level	5	5	5	3	2	1	
Total number of Questions	2	49	69	39	0	0	159
			Percent Use of Each Type of Question per Child and for Total Population				
Requests for Information	0	59.2	47.8	33.3	0	0	47.2
Requests for Clarification	0	4.1	5.8	25.6	0	0	10.1
Requests for Permission	0	2.0	2.9	0	0	0	1.9
Requests for Approval	0	4.1	8.7	10.3	0	0	7.5
Yes/No Questions	100	26.5	30.4	7.7	0	0	24.4
Requests for Action	0	0	4.4	17.9	0	0	6.3
Rhethorical Questions	0	0	0	5.2	0	0	1.3
Hesitation Questions	0	4.1	0	0	0	0	1.3

Table 4

Percentage of Questions in English Asked by Each Child and Across all Children in Informal Settings

Child	Paula	Juanita	Cesar	Jose	Ana	Carmen	All Children N=6
Level	5	5	5	3	2	1	
Total number of Questions	21	16	10	3	4	9	63
			Percent Use of Each Type of Question per Child and for Total Population				
Requests for Information	57.1	37.5	10	100	75	67	49.2
Requests for Clarification	4.7	18.7	30	0	0	11	12.7
Requests for Permission	9.5	0	0	0	0	11	4.8
Requests for Approval	0	0	0	0	25	0	1.6
Yes/No Questions	28.8	37.5	40	0	0	11	25.3
Requests for Action	4.7	6.2	20	0	0	0	6.3
Rhethorical Questions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hesitation Questions	0	4.1	0	0	0	0	0

Table 5

Percentage of Questions in Spanish Asked by Each Child and Across all Children in Informal Settings

Child	Paula	Juanita	Cesar	Jose	Ana	Carmen	All Children N=6
Level	5	5	5	3	1-2	1	
Total number of Questions	14	83	34	22	2	0	155
			Percent Use of Each Type of Question per Child and for Total Population				
Requests for Information	43.0	20.5	58.8	41.0	0	0	33.7
Requests for Clarification	7.0	4.8	20.6	32.0	0	0	12.3
Requests for Permission	0	0	0	9.0	0	0	1.2
Requests for Approval	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yes/No Questions	50.0	68.7	17.6	18.0	100.0	0	49.0
Requests for Action	0	4.8	3.0	0	0	0	3.2
Rhethorical Questions	0	1.2	0	0	0	0	.6
Hesitation Questions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 6

Use of Questions Per Classroom Activity
Total Repertoire

	Language	Reading	Math	Art	Informal Talk (Breaks, classroom cleaning)	Total
Total Number of Questions per Activity	132	29	37	68	72	338

Percentage of Use of Each Question Type per Activity

	Language	Reading	Math	Art	Informal Talk (Breaks, classroom cleaning)	Total
Requests for Information	49.2	48.3	48.6	30.9	37.5	42.9
Requests for Clarification	12.9	10.4	16.3	20.6	2.8	12.4
Requests for Permission	.8	3.4	2.7	11.8	16.7	6.8
Requests for Approval Approval	4.5	3.4	0	7.3	6.9	5.0
Yes/No Questions	20.5	27.6	24.3	10.3	20.8	19.5
Requests for Action	3.0	0	5.4	11.8	1.4	4.5
Rhetorical Questions	1.5	0	2.7	7.3	8.3	4.2
Hesitation Questions	7.6	6.9	0	0	5.6	4.7